



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

February 17, 2015

Chairman Tercyak, Chairman Winfield, Honorable Ranking Members and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

I urge your support for HB 5854 AN ACT CONCERNING THANKSGIVING AND DOUBLE OVERTIME WAGES.

Without family, it is not Thanksgiving. There is no one holiday that ties American families together more closely than Thanksgiving. For two centuries, we have traveled great distances to reunite with loved ones, take time off from work and give thanks for the blessings of this great country.

Other holidays are also important -- Christmas to those of the Christian faith, Yom Kippur to Jews, and the Fourth of July to patriotic citizens and the occasional pyromaniac -- but for no other holiday do Americans of all stripes explicitly take time off to be with their families.

Traditionally the day after Thanksgiving -- Black Friday -- has been incredibly important to the nation's retailers. However, according to statistics compiled by the National Retail Federation, Americans are falling out of love with Black Friday and sales have been trending downwards in recent years.

To combat that, national retailers have been opening up earlier and earlier -- forcing their workers to come in on Thanksgiving itself. In many cases, they offer their workers no overtime pay. Some states have resisted that trend. In Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island non-essential retailers are required to close on Thanksgiving Day.

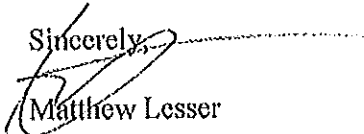
We could follow their lead. Or we can give retailers and employees a choice -- guaranteeing overtime pay to workers on Thanksgiving Day allowing them to at least make the choice between spending time with their families and earning a slightly larger paycheck.

The decision by large retailers to open on Thanksgiving Day particularly hurts small retailers -- the small businesses who represent the backbone of our economy. In my city, Middletown, I do not believe a single retailer was open on Thanksgiving Day. Dmitri D'Alessandro of Middletown Framing, a local frame shop, complains that he loses market share to Michael's, a national retailer, every Thanksgiving. Across the state, even as overall Thanksgiving Weekend sales fall, those sales are cannibalized by retailers who force their workers to show up on the Holiday itself and to do so at risk of losing their jobs and for no overtime.

Responsible employers who care about their employees already offer their workers overtime when forced to work on a holiday. It seems reasonable that the State should compel overtime pay for those that do not in the limited circumstance of the Thanksgiving Holiday.

Thank you for considering this legislation and I urge you to report favorably on its passage.

Sincerely,


Matthew Lesser

BUSINESS INSIDER

Black Friday Sales Plummeted This Year



AFP
NOV. 30, 2014, 5:58 PM

Consumer spending during America's Thanksgiving weekend dropped compared with last year, but the decline can be attributed to an improving economy and changing shopping habits, a survey found Sunday.

According to the National Retail Federation's Thanksgiving weekend spending survey, 55.1 percent of holiday shoppers were expected to visit stores or go online over Thanksgiving weekend, down from 58.7 percent last year.



© AFP/File Paul J. Richards

A Black Friday shopper after purchasing his Samsung big-screen TV at a Wal-Mart in Fairfax, Virginia, on Friday.

"A strengthening economy that changes consumers' reliance on deep discounts, a highly competitive environment, early promotions, and the ability to shop 24/7 online all contributed to the shift witnessed this weekend," NRF president and CEO Matthew Shay said in a statement.

According to the survey, the average weekend shopper was expected to spend \$380.95, down 6.4 percent from \$407.02 last year.

Total spending was expected to reach \$50.9 billion, down from last year's estimated \$57.4 billion.

American consumers flood stores looking for steep discounts, particularly on electronics, toys, and clothes, during the Thanksgiving weekend, which kicks off Christmas holiday spending.

Black Friday still drew the biggest crowds, but the weekend has been expanded into a number of speciality commercial "holidays": "Gray Thursday," "Small Business Saturday," and "Cyber Monday."

Of those who went shopping Saturday, three-quarters said they did so specifically to support "Small Business Saturday," which is a growing movement to encourage residents to support local sellers.

Many online retailers also offered discounts in the days before Black Friday, possibly accounting for a reduced overall spend on the day itself.

"Early online promotions before the big weekend may have taken some of consumer's spending power with them," the NRF statement read.

The survey was conducted Friday and Saturday by Prosper Insights & Analytics for NRF. It polled 4,631 consumers and had a margin of error of 1.5 percentage points.

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